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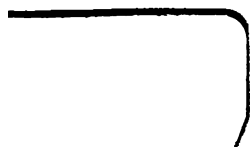
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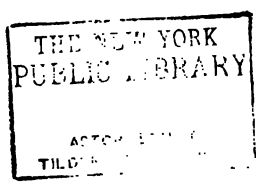


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THE CHIMES OF FREEDOM

MARY PUTNAM DENNY

AUTHOR OF "THE PROPHET OF FLORENCE"

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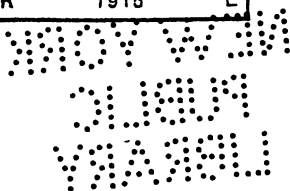
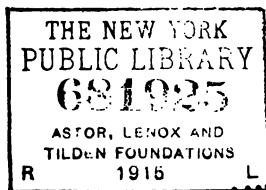
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THE CHIMES OF FREEDOM

THE CHIMES OF FREEDOM

CHAPTER I

A CHAPEL OF PRAYER

IT was winter in Monterrey, yet in the grand plaza, flowers were blooming. A riot of azaleas, poppies, jasmine and geraniums; the gorgeous tints relieved by the masses of green of the giant palms and ferns, and by the orange trees with their clusters of golden fruit. Just in front of the plaza stood the great cathedral, with its storied campanile rising in three tiers toward the gold of the southern sky. And the triple chimes ringing out continuous music over the city. An intermingled symphony of the old and the new in Mexican life.

All was white and gold within the cathedral,

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leading through a wake of angel faces, and the breath of waving censers toward the altar and the prayer. Crowned by a sweet faced Madonna, which seemed an expression of the eternal voice of motherhood. The face which an artist had caught from some far eastern light, and translated here in the subdued glow of the Temple of Prayer.

A little removed from the glow of the outer place of prayer, was an inner chapel for silent devotion, reached through a labyrinth of recesses and dim passages. As the last wavering sound waves of the chimes came through the silences, a woman crept slowly toward the shadowed place. There was a little time of unuttered petition there, for even here alone in the far recesses of devotion, she could not speak the sorrow, and what seemed to her in her blind groping the great sin of the years.

It was not so much a prayer for mercy that she breathed to-day but for vengeance — that someway through the dark night of her own life she might see the glitter of steel, and the cold hand of justice pressed down upon the life

of those who in one moment of time had robbed her of the joy of life; and then created a barrier of poverty and oppression around the lives of her family, the narrow clan of kinsmen that constituted her own little world of life.

Now there arose before her as never before, the sense of wrong, some sin of her girlhood, that had grown in her consciousness during the years in seeming enormity, until now it had become a veritable impersonation, an incarnation of evil in her inner life, for which in some way she must give penance before the spirit of justice would be placated, and its hand directed against her foe.

The black lace mantilla that she wore fell over her face, screening her from the gaze of the outer world, as she reached for the candles, then retracing again the dim passage-ways dropped upon her knees at the entrance to the great outer place of worship; there to begin the one supreme act of penitence, traversing all the long aisles thus on her knees, over the floors strewn with the bright mosaics, and

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above the shining cherub faces, toward the greater altar and the prayer.

The face of the glorified Madonna in its age old sweetness and devotion looked down upon her kneeling thus, seeming just to touch with the light of its maternal beauty the mist of bitterness and unanswered anguish that enshrouded the woman in her mad groping after truth and peace, and that hid the vision of the Father of love and of an infinite compassion.

Again the triple chimes began their music, ringing out from the temple silences through the city, and past the gates, and on through the narrow trail that leads toward the Chepe Vera Hills where some of the great conflicts of old Mexico have been waged, and the grand old ruins of the Bishop Verger palace stand guardian over the spirit of freedom as it has struggled here, where the power of an old world civilization and despotism yet prevails.

Yet the music of the chimes as it swayed far out, in its search for realization, and the

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beauty of the pictured Madonna, all centered for expression upon the kneeling woman as she groped in the temple silences toward the meaning of unanswered prayer.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE OF MENDOZA

THE home of the Mendozas in Monterrey, was a type of those grand old villas, enclosed in stately walls, that still linger in Mexico. Within the enclosure was an old garden, the paths overgrown with vines and hidden in beds of violets, and a tangle of azaleas and jasmine; and over the broken stone benches and little statuettes of old workmanship brought by the first master of the house from Spain, the roses ran riot.

The Mendozas were among the first ship-masters of New Spain. They came of one of the greatest of all the patrician families of Grenada, with just a strain of Aztec blood of the Montezumas, that made them love the Mexican life; and adore the blue of her free heavens, and the long cadences of peace of the Southern day, marked by the silver and the

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gold of the far hovering mists over the great mountain height Popocatepetl and her sister peaks, with the fervor of a true aboriginal.

There had been far sunlit days of the golden past, when the villa had been aglow with light and music. And the sound of falling water over the marble fountains in the garden, gave ever the rhythm of soft ringing bells, and of continuous music to the place.

Gabriel Mendoza, the sixth of his house, was one of the deputies of state, at the City of Mexico, at the time of the Austrian usurper's short reign and of his defeat and ruin. Mendoza once in that brief reign, at a festa or chance pageant, had caught the look of love and adoration upon the face of poor Carlotta the empress, as she looked toward the face of her prince. Her gaze veiled by a mist of tears, a vague prophecy of future suffering. And the voice of a score of generations of chivalrous men stirred in her breast, to protect her from the impending destruction which he saw slowly approaching.

And when that hour of doom fully rang,

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with the magnanimity and nobility of nature of a true patriot and soldier, he had pleaded with the council of the Republic that the princely usurper might be permitted to return to his Fatherland, rather than be put to death. And when no word prevailed, he was one of those who stood near the fated child of kings, as the chimes rang out the death of the noble Maximilian, and of the joy of life to his queen. And was one of the guard who before that hour had guided the poor Carlotta to a place of safety.

For this Gabriel Mendoza stirred the enmity of certain stern-hearted men in the inner circle of the Republic. The enmity that was deepened in a few years when upon the establishment of a new administration of government, he pleaded for more gentleness from the masters of the land, for the poor peons and the Indian serfs on the great ranches, and those toiling in the dark depths of the silver mines. And for a greater measure of individual freedom for all of the people.

It was a cry against those who were already

beginning to build the foundations of a great military despotism. This enmity burst into sudden fury, when upon one of his yearly visits to the City of Mexico, he struck down with his own hand, an officer who was beating a poor peon serf, enslaved in a chain-gang. And again a few days after when he set free a whole troop of Indians which an American trader was enslaving in his silver mines adjoining Mendoza's estate in Coahuila. And ever in the great national assembly his voice was raised for the weak and the oppressed.

It was after all this. After years of service for his country, as soldier and statesmen, that Mendoza brought into the home of his fathers in the last hours of its beauty, and unknown to Mendoza, just as the shadows of impending darkness and ruin were gathering over the family and the home, as his wife, the fair Senorita Elena Flores, daughter of the Governor of the province.

The marvellous beauty of the little senorita was known and praised throughout all of Monterrey, and the neighboring cities. Even in the

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City of Mexico, those who had seen her for an instant at some state function, or seen her stand for a moment with the madre on the piazza of the palace when the troops passed for the Governor's review, acclaimed her the most beautiful child of Mexico.

One night Mendoza returned unexpectedly to his home in Monterrey; and as he entered the brightly lighted patio where Elena sat upon a low divan with the boy Gabriel, she caught an expression of strength and sacrifice upon his face that she had never beheld before, and could not now fully divine. He did not speak when he first entered but sat near her among the palms and oleanders, and listened as she played a strain from a harp that the sisters had taught her to use in her convent days.

Then rising quickly as if no longer able to restrain his feeling, he left her and went into the gardens, and there stood in whispered words, with dark-faced men, whom Elena did not see or hear. Their faces and voices were screened from her by that mystic veil that is often drawn before impending sorrow.

Mendoza soon returned, bearing one solitary rose from the great cluster that climbed over the north wall. He came close to Elena, and bending over her and the child, all the tenderness of a life-time of devotion, of love toward one face, one voice — gleamed in his dark eyes. It was but for a moment, he felt that she must not enter with him into the dark, see the face of the enemy, and without a word he vanished again into the night.

After he had gone, Elena arose, moving uneasily across the patio. Striving to breathe out another strain of music, but she could not, and slowly the silences of the impending night of life enveloped her, and she knelt speechless beside the sleeping child. Speechless before that dirge of darkness and despair, whose meaning she could not fully understand.

The morning brought the full meaning of that night of foreboding and sorrow. Senor Gabriel Mendoza had been seized by his enemies, and spirited to some dark dungeon in one of the prison fortresses of the land, there to be secretly assassinated or doomed to

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a living death. Escape seemed impossible only by some miracle of a higher power.

And Elena Mendoza, the wife, tearing from her, her jewels and embroidered silks, and garbing herself only in a black gown of coarsest weave, fled to the inner chapel of the Cathedral, there to vow perpetual vengeance against the destroyer of her home. Pledging the life of her child to fight the enemy of her house. Then she had stripped the home of its mirrors and crystal candelabra, and rare old Spanish tapestries and pictures. All save one room, the one with the floor of inlaid marble, and the picture of the Virgin of Guadalupe in its jeweled frame. Sold all but these few treasures that the money might be spent in training the boy to be a true soldier of freedom. All Mendoza's outlying estates had been seized by the enemy, and this was all that she possessed.

Then Elena had learned from her old servant, Sarai, the art of lace making; and giving all her time to the weaving, forgotten the garden with its jasmine and violets, caring alone for the rose bush that grew over the north

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walls. And naught remained for her, when in a few short years, she had sent the boy to the University of Mexico, but the dark of her home, the curse of despair, and the great cry in the desolated temple of her soul, for vengeance on the destroyer.

CHAPTER III

SHADOW LAND

IT was an evening of a great concert of song in the pagoda of the plaza. The music was adapted from the theme of an old world master, to the life of Mexico.

Among the grand old trees, and giant palms of the plaza were gathered a motley throng — Spaniards and Mexicans, peons and the dark-faced children of the desert, with here and there stranger faces, American merchants and English and German tourists.

The soft light stealing through the shadowed place, disclosed faces of wondrous charm. There were señoritas, perfect types of southern beauty, and madonna-like señoras standing near, holding sacred their guardianship of love over their daughters.

In a little space beyond the inner circle where the patrician families of Monterrey were gath-

ered, stood a child, of one of the wandering tribes of Mexico, called by some "The children of the desert." She carried a basket of some coarse woven mats in one hand, and in the other a broken guitar as if in some way to join in the music of the great concert. Sometimes in the intervals between the strains of the music, she would run her hand caressingly over the broken chords, but there came forth only a low plaintive strain — the shadow of a song.

The Senora Elena Mendoza came tonight, for her boy had returned from his long years of study in the university. And in a few months would enter upon permanent service in the City of Mexico. And his mother would have his life for once touched with the light and beauty of the old days; receive one joy-note from the past. He stood by her side in the inner circle, beneath the palms, the place in the plaza where she had ever stood among the chief families of the city.

This was the first time Senora Elena had emerged from the dark of her night of sorrow,

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and been seen save in the dimly lighted cathedral or the seclusion of the old villa. And eager faces were turned toward her tonight. Old men and women who had known her in her youth, when all her outer world seemed touched and transfigured by the strange illusive glow of her beauty; or young señoritas timorously peering from shadowed places toward her, toward a face expressing a life whose tragedy and wrong, had been whispered to them like tales from a book of ancient story. And they gazed toward her now as toward some unearthly visitant of the night, some Madonna of grief standing across a void of suffering from whose dark shores they shrank back in sudden fear.

Just as the music reached towards its climax of beauty, the chimes of the cathedral bells rang out over the city, giving the last call to prayer. Then suddenly as if led by the strange power of the song note of prayer, Gabriel Mendoza stirred from his mother's side, and looking past one by one the faces of those gathered near, his gaze rested upon the face

of the child of the desert people, standing alone in the shadows.

The girl at first shrank back as though afrighted, then her fingers sought again the broken chords of the guitar, as if in answer to the song-prayer and the unspoken word of Gabriel, he who stood among the proud ones of the land.

As all the varied notes of chorus and chime now blend in the grand finale, the motley throng rise from the shadows of the plaza, and crowd toward the narrow streets as if suddenly awakened from a mystic spell of beauty and of power. Gabriel touched his mother's arm, with an authoritative gesture as they reached the place where the forsaken child still stood, unable for a time to separate this hour with its beauty and light and the far-away note of the music, from the dream, and murmured, "Madre, a child for thee, a little one, who may mean joy and comfort, and the love of life, when I have gone to the far ways, which have ever been in thy life, the place of service for thy son!"

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"But, Gabriel," the mother pleaded, realizing the note of authority in her son's voice, to which she must finally yield; "She is but a child of the people. And our house is of the ancient one of Mendoza of Grenada; and thou must remember that my father was once ruler here; once dwelt in the great palace of the state. Did'st thou not see the faces of the people glow, as we entered the plaza to-night? We are honored even now, shadowed as our life is by poverty and the bitterness of sorrow!"

"Madre," and his voice as he spoke now with its deep note of strength and authority, seemed to break a little way through the silences of self and sullen unbroken grief, that had ever enshrouded her life, "she is indeed a child of the people, but our people, and it is for them, for the least child of all the land, for which my father suffered, and thou descended into the deep valley of grief. If his sufferings avail, we must reach out toward such as these. His life is interpreted only as we answer the cry of Mexico's oppressed!"

Senora Elena Mendoza answered in the low dirge of a Latin prayer. The son had touched the deep springs of her life sorrow; and she could only grope out toward the full meaning of his words. She murmured low now, touching the hand of the girl, and pointing dimly through the far unlighted way toward the street that led to the villa of Mendoza: "On the morrow thou mayest come and live with us, alone amidst the roses; and old Sarai will teach thee to weave on the loom the webs of finest lace."

The child murmured her assent, kneeling and kissing the strange senora's hand. Her face transfigured by the joy of it all, the wondrous new way of life that was opening before her.

CHAPTER IV

A WEB OF GOLD

ON the east side of the patio, ran the long, low apartment that Senora Elena Mendoza had consecrated to Sarai and her loom. And made a veritable shrine of labor, because of the rare zarapes and laces that had been woven by Sarai's hand there. And when the door was closed upon her great outer world, even by the proud patrician hand of the Senora herself, she who the older ones of the Mexican city, honored as the daughter of Jose de Floris, once ruler of the province.

And when the morning after her son's departure, the Senora Elena had brought the child Amalia into her home, she had led her first to this room, this place of the beatification of labor, for she could think of no greater lot for this child of the people, than to learn to

follow old Sarai in the beautiful weaves of old Spanish designs. And to carry the delicate webs of lace and drawn work, in baskets to sell to the throngs of northern tourists who thronged the plazas of the Mexican city, in the winter months.

And the child had dumbly followed, vaguely going over Sarai's lessons in lacemaking, through all the long hours of the golden southern days that followed, that she might live in the home, where the one had lived who in that far night of the great concert, with the wonder of song glorifying his face, had spoken to her, and opened to the girl, unknown gateways of life and song, whose dim meaning she could not fully divine, but only look forward to, through the hush of those first prophetic hours of life. Sometimes in her work, old Sarai would pause and tell over again to the girl, those pictured legends that have entered into the very inner structure of old Mexican life, and to weave them even in their intangible beauty into the outer web of zarape and lace.

To-day there was a most exquisite pattern

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of old Spanish design, that Amalia was weaving alone. And as Sarai paused in directing the work, she told over to the girl, the story of the temple of Gaudalupe, that enshrined the miraculous picture of the Virgin. A copy of which in its jeweled frame was the one great treasure of Senora Elena's home.

The legend of how a poor outcast Indian, had been led out of his own dark life toward the Unseen and the Heavenly. As the Indian was passing the hill of Tepeyac, he had heard the sound of sweetest music, and suddenly the portals of the Unseen opened, and the Virgin Mother appeared to him and gave to him a message to the church that a great temple of prayer and devotion should be erected upon this place of revelation.

She then bade him climb to the rocky summit of the height, and gather roses, which he should carry in his tilma to the bishop as credentials of his heavenly mission. He obeyed and found the roses where never flowers had bloomed before. And when he unfolded his tilma before the great church man, there was

painted there a wondrous picture of the Virgin, robed in the blue of heaven and the crimson gold of the setting sun, and gleaming with stars caught from the light of those that shine above the southern hills.

The bishop took the message, and the picture as from above, and enshrined it in a splendid cathedral. And the Mother of Christ became the patron saint of all of New Spain.

Through the long gold of the southern day, the story lingered on old Sarai's lips. Dwelling upon the delicate depths and shadows, the burnt amber of subdued beauty, until at early twilight as Amalia finished the pattern she seemed to weave all into the beauty of the rich design.

Then in the hush that always followed the first joy of completion, Sarai led Amalia into the great room with its light and shadows, and to the foot of the pictured Madonna in the jeweled frame. There to say over and over the rosary prayer that she had taught her on the day of her first coming into Elena Mendoza's

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home. And there to kneel a little while in silence.

Then Sarai spread out with her worn hands the lace fabric before them, and whispered: "It is perfect, Amalia, better than I could have woven." The sudden light of inspiration lighted her face as she continued, "And, Amalia, because thy work is perfect, thou mayest ever dwell in this place of peace, and serve the Senora Elena and Gabriel, and care for these." Stretching her hands as she spoke out over the room with its treasure, and beyond to the garden with the over-hanging roses, and beds of violets and jasmine.

Amalia did not answer at once, as the thought of service forever for Gabriel came to her. Only the wondrous light of the love that should lead her on to far unknown heights of sacrifice transfigured her face, and she murmured, over and over, in this aftermath of the day's toil, to Sarai she thought alone, as she would whisper the first of her rosary prayer: "Gabriel! Gabriel!"

In another instant, Senora Elena Mendoza

stood in the open portals, risen to seeming unusual height at that word which had touched race and the pride of birth. Her proud gaze swept the room with its treasures, and the faces of old Sarai and of Amalia as she exclaimed, "Amalia, thou art but a child of the desert people, and Gabriel, my child, is son of the Mendoza, the proudest blood of old Grenada. Thou must never again speak his name, or cross the threshold of this room!"

Amalia sank with a low cry to the Senora's feet for answer, murmuring over the prayer of penitence, that she had taught her to lisp in the inner sanctum of the great temple of prayer.

CHAPTER V

THE HOME COMING

“**G**ABRIEL was returning, would soon reach Mexico City from his oriental cruise, and then home and mother.” That was the message which old Sarai heard Senora Elena read over and over, after she had broken the heavy seal of a letter.

Sarai had no sooner caught the message, than she began preparing the old home for Gabriel's reception. And Amalia followed giving an added touch here and there. A vase of delicate violets upon the marble pedestal, or a cluster of asparagus fern trailing from a window. In the lace room a new web of Spanish lace was placed upon the loom, for Sarai knew that Gabriel would delight to watch again the intricate weaving of the designs.

At the hour of Gabriel's return, Amalia was

alone in the garden, trimming the beds of violets and of heliotrope, and re-entwining the old rose tree that had fallen from the trellises. And from the refectory came the rich aroma of Sarai's Mexican cookery. Amalia caught only a glimpse of the tall, erect soldier, his face bronzed by the suns of many climes, as he came through the portals of the patio. Senora Elena led him directly into the great room with the treasured pictured tilma, and marble pedestals; and there not even old Sarai might enter during those first hours of silent worshipful communion of the mother with her child.

Not until the chimes had rang the vesper hour, did Senora Elena lead the way out upon the west balcony, with Sarai crouching near in her old familiar place, and Amalia hidden somewhere beneath the rose trellises. There was music then, by the band of boys from the convent school. And Amalia played upon the harp, that had been the one great gift from Senora Elena during her years of service for her.

Gabriel listened through the first selection

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by the band, then at the new note from Amalia's harp, he interrupted his mother with a gesture when she would have bade the band play again; and asked in that mingled tone of authority and love, that could not be refused by her, that the child Amalia might be brought within the light of their home circle.

In a few moments at Sarai's word, Amalia stole softly through the rose bushes and then up the marble steps to a space beside them. For a moment Gabriel appeared startled as if he really had expected to see the child Amalia, just as he had left her years before. The forsaken child whom he had first seen that hour of the great concert beneath the old trees of the plaza. He was startled now at this new expression of highest womanhood, of beauty, toward which he had only looked with vague strained vision through the years, and not fully realized. Amalia shrank back from the light, and Gabriel's gaze, and refusing the proffered seat, knelt at Sarai's side.

There was a little time of silence. Then at last at his mother's impatient questioning,

Gabriel lifted his gaze that had been held fascinated as the one candle-glow revealed the starry beauty of this child of the desert. And began to give the story of his wanderings, then the way home, and to reveal again the glories of his native land, of the new yet old Mexico.

He paused, then stirred by some wavering note in the wordless song-prayer of Amalia, that had voiced in some mystic way to the soul of Gabriel, the great unanswered cry of Mexico's sorrow, he began to tell the story of the needs of the people, the chance cries of hunger and despair, and of a bitter servitude that he had heard. His words came now as a sword-thrust to his mother's heart, as for an instant there gleamed before her the way of suffering of the father's life, which the child must follow: "And madre mia, I have heard that cry — the cry of little children hungering for bread; of boys scarcely older than I when my father left us, bearing loads of thirty pounds upon their shoulders, far out upon the Atlacomulco road, over certain distances that must be covered to satisfy the hungry task-masters

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in the great hacienda of the sugar camps. And I must follow the call. There is an opening way. The great free people of the North will answer when once they hear to understand the cry of Mexico's despair!"

His mother did not answer at first, and when she did, her words came through broken sobs: "But Gabriel, I sold my jewels and stripped the home of its treasures, that thou might be trained in all the learning of our fathers; be a true son of old Mexico, and stand among the princes of the land. And then, and then—" her voice came now, as across vast voids of feeling—all the subdued anger and passion—the muffled longing for vengeance, trembling in its dirge, "That thou might strike one great blow against our enemy, the destroyer of our happiness—our life!"

"Madre," Gabriel answered, bending low toward her, "Thou dost not see the faces of the starved and the enslaved. It is for these that I must strike, not for revenge. A few short hours and the way opens. One great blow now, and the fetters fall, from thousands

of imprisoned ones. Slaves of the dark silver mines, and the reeking pestilent haunted fields of the far southern ranches. Then a shout of victory will arise, that thou canst even hear and understand!"

For answer his mother fell with a cry at his feet. "Gabriel mio, Thou must listen, I see but one face, and hear but one voice. The perfume laden breath of roses is in the air, and the censers from our family altar, whisper again his voice of love. He is bending here, even near us now, and life is life, and joy and peace. A step across the threshold — and the slow death of hope. A morning that brought only deeper death and the eternal silences. And then the vow, when before the awful knowledge that the enemy and his cursed band, had betrayed Gabriel Mendoza to a living tomb in some far fortress prison — the vow with my helpless hand raised over my child — that you should avenge. In some great hour of future power, strike the mailed hand that dared to destroy the truest son of old Mexico,

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to drag in the dust of hatred and malice, the honor of our house!"

Gabriel stooped gently now, and lifted his mother into his arms, and spoke soothing words, told again the fairy legends that she had taught him as a little child; and for a little while they were back again in the gold-enchanted days, before the dark of betrayal and vengeance had shadowed life.

And old Sarai drawing near, sang softly a Spanish lullaby. And then they bore her to her couch, and the tired lines of passionate hate slowly relaxed from her face. And Sarai watching near the senora, as she often did until the far hours of the morning thought that she caught in the sad face, shadowed now by the brooding mist of motherhood, the picture of the Madonna, in the softened light of the old cathedral.

It was the morning of the third day after that night of sorrow, that Senora Elena Mendoza found on the marble pedestal of the shadowed room this letter of farewell:

"Forgive me, for I know that this will cause

you tears. But I have heard the call, so great and deep, that it reached below and beyond all other cries of life. The voice of the despair of a people, crushed beneath the cruelty of social tyranny. I have beheld the faces of pitiful dwarfed childhood; and the mute sadness of men and women old before their time; and then heard the glee of those whose life of tyranny is but a mockery of the sacred word of freedom! Weep not for me, but for these; and rejoice that thou art the mother of a soldier of liberty — and one who has a voice to speak their wrong."

There was no word from Senora Elena to Sarai, or to Amalia, bending over her lace work. But only the withdrawal into the great room with its shadows, and pictured story, and the staying there in silence through the long dark hours.

Old Sarai would creep in without speaking, bearing the silver tray with food and drink, and then steal away, to return again in another hour, to carry away the tray with its scarcely tasted morsels.

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Above all else the Senora Elena driven by some strange divination of evil, hated the voice and face of the girl Amalia, and bade her always be silent, and never to play upon the harp. For in some way had she not in her wordless song of that night of Gabriel's first coming, reached toward some far hidden depths of feeling in the life of her son? A door of devotion and sacrifice, of a realization of the world's suffering toward which she could only grope in the dark. He had entered portals of the spirit's life, which through the strong surges of hatred and malice were closed to the mother's life.

While the Senora Elena sat alone thus in her first grief, there was given to Amalia and Gabriel one morning hour that would forever shine in their rosary of life. Amalia was standing alone beneath the rose trellis, an old rosary of black pearls falling at her feet, and her hands outstretched in the expression of a wordless prayer. Gabriel was kneeling by her side before she felt his presence, and raising the rosary from the dust, translated for her the

meaning of her prayer. Prayer for Senora Elena, and for old Sarai and for the hidden suffering ones of Mexico, whose far cry of human need the girl could only feel as something dim and unutterable in the distances.

The chimes broke over the city in all their meaning of struggle and longing and fulfillment as he reached toward the end of their rosary of devotion. And looking up into her face he whispered:

“Let us call them the Chimes of Freedom! Ringing out to all of Mexico’s oppressed, their great hour of final liberation!”

There was no other word, only the whispered prayer, and the music of the chimes.

CHAPTER VI

THE SPIRIT OF THE DESERT

IT was a night, months after Gabriel's departure into the Unknown, that Amalia awoke with a little start from a troubled dream, in which she and Sarai seemed alone out in some place of silence and of dread; and found the old nurse kneeling beside her couch.

For a few moments, Sarai deep in a rosary prayer, did not notice the girl's awaking. Then when she realized it, she passed her worn hand over Amalia's smooth brow with the old caressing touch, that had always meant so much of peace and the subdued joy of life; and whispered: "Listen, Amalia mia. I was alone in the loom-room. There was a cloud of sudden gloom, that seemed like the mists of the mountains, above and beyond me; and then the faces of little children; and the wan, drawn faces of old men and women touched with hunger and

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suffering, and far-away voices. And then one voice, and as I listened I knew that it was Gabriel's voice. It seemed to whisper the need of all the others, their hunger and longing. The voice seemed to break and falter in the distances, as if imprisoned in some far place. There were silences again, and then the faces and voices of stranger people.

"And I awoke and knew, O Amalia, by all the love that I bear for the house of Mendoza, and for the child Gabriel, that he was lost and imprisoned somewhere in the regions toward the great Northland.

"Now we must follow, Amalia. Search the desert places for Gabriel. It will mean long dark journeys over the far waste places, yet we cannot falter, in the lone night-watches, the voice will ever be with us! And to-night we will begin the journey. Senora Elena has not seen or felt the vision, and she will not listen to my word. When we bring her son to her again in safety, she will rejoice, and her joy will cover all the fear and dread of the hours of waiting!"

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Mutely Ámalia arose and followed the leading of the old nurse. And they soon gathered together the food and clothing that they must take with them for the journey.

As they slowly crept through the great outer court, and into the shadows of the garden, old Sarai drew a bag from her gown, and counted over again the glittering pieces; and then whispered, "We will walk to the first Indian pueblo that lies beyond the city. There we will get the Indian Alessandra to guide us toward a great desert way where we may meet Gabriel and his captors. That seems the way toward which the voices lead."

They hurried on now through the city, pausing only at the market place, as the first rays of the dawn touched the glistening spires of the campanile, to buy fruit, and some flour for their tortillas, of old Tasso who was early at his stall.

It was midday before they reached the Indian pueblo. It contained a cluster of adobe huts set at the edge of cactus covered fields, and

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beyond the desert, with the great mountain ranges guardian over all.

Before the first hut, Sarai prepared to cook, setting up her braseo, and establishing a fonda by the wayside. Then she bade Amalia to go a little ways to the door of another adobe hut, and call three times for the Indian burro driver, Alessandra.

Amalia stood for a moment in the doorway of the Indian home. It was but for an instant, but in that moment of time, she was back again the child of the desert peoples. Back to that hour before Gabriel's voice through the glow of the plaza, and the mingled strains of the great concert, and the chimes of prayer, gave the first call to live.

There was but one room in the adobe hut, and half of it was taken up with the corn-stalks used for fodder for the burros. The floor was dirt, and there were no windows, so that all the room, except the little space in front of the door was kept in perpetual shadow. In a corner stood the bed, cross-pieces resting upon

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four conical moulds of clay and upon these rough boards.

An Indian woman came out with her little bambino strapped in the zarape on her back, and Amalia bent to stroke its cheeks with her fingers, and to murmur over again the lullaby which another Indian mother had whispered to a baby girl. She whispered it over again and again, quite unconscious of aught save the blue of the southern sky bending soft over all, and the touch of the baby hand. Sarai impatient of the girl's delay left the tortillas and beans to burn by the way-side, and her voice aroused Amalia now to her duty, their call to service. And turning from this doorway of her own childhood's life, Amalia gave the cry: "Alessandra! Alessandra!"

The Indian burro driver soon answered to the call; and after much persuasion, he consented to help them forward on their journey.

Late in that day, they started over the long white way, toward the north and the beckoning voices. As they journeyed the desert opened before them, not in its full grand sweep

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of revelation at first, but slowly, gradually as of a birth from infinitude of the first grand primal thoughts of peace, of love — of sorrow rising from chaos to meet the first throb of human life.

The far view was marked by dim piled up masses of lava. Extinct volcanic ranges, rising like cloud-lines in the distances, crowned with a tracery of silver and gold, with one great dominant mountain peak, far omniscient over all.

Now quickly, unheralded, came the mantle of the night, enshrouding all in darkness. For a little while they journeyed on through the pathless way. It was old Sarai's will that they should journey thus until morning. But on a sudden Alessandra, the Indian driver, without a word brought the burros to a pause, and causing them to kneel down in the sand, drew his own zarape close around him, and declared that they should remain there for the night.

Old Sarai's reproaches were of no avail, and throwing her one large wool zarape around her

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and the girl, she prepared for the night and sleep.

It was far in the watches of that night that Amalia awoke to find the burros and the Indian driver gone, and she and Sarai alone in the pathless silences. Yet she did not speak, only drew nearer to old Sarai, and drew the zarape close over their faces, to hide the night and the sudden haunting fear.

The desert silences now blend over them, direct and powerful, and seeming incarnate in a living presence; impersonating at first all the haunting voices of fear, question and unsatisfied longing. Then a voice came clear and insistent, breaking the voids of fear and dread, a voice that held in its tone all of life that Amalia had known. The shadowed hour of her childhood; the brightness of that first hour out in the plaza with the glorious symphony of the concert and the chimes; Gabriel's voice opening up to her the wonder of life; the home in the old villa, and the lace making under the watchful care of old Sarai; Gabriel's home coming; his departure into the unknown; and now

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this first great call of life to service. And in the aftermath came peace — the peace of sorrow that carries one in a few short hours over vast ways of spiritual experiences. Nearer and nearer toward the great Unknown, toward the place of highest fulfillment.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAVE

IT was the full dawn when old Sarai awoke and found the faithless Indian guide gone with the burros, and Amalia sitting a little ways from her. Her gaze riveted upon the dim line of mountains in the distances, and enwrapped with a strange new peace — a mantle of restfulness, that seemed to the girl a part of the desert solitude.

Sarai did not speak for a few moments. No words could voice her feeling of utter chagrin toward the renegade Alessandra. And he a child of the same great tribe from which her mother had always claimed their heritage.

Then as Sarai arose and followed the footprints of the burros a little way, there came the full sense of the desert above and around her — casting over her as over the first pilgrim its irresistible spell. The very light of a

deeper quality than elsewhere, lying with an opaline luster over the world. And hushed and awed, not by the same authoritative voice of revelation, that breathed life to Amalia in the far night-watches, but by that realization of the silences that comes when one enters the ruins of some forgotten temple of worship, she stood for a little while in the attitude of worship — of adoration. Then drawing from her gown the half-forgotten rosary, she breathed over again prayer for those who had constituted in their lives, for years her world of life. Prayer for Senora Elena Mendoza, and her child Gabriel, and Signor Mendoza, the father, if he yet lived, and for the child-woman Amalia, who had followed with her into the dark. Thus she dedicated the desert morn with prayer.

And strengthened by it all, she wrapped again their burdens in the woolen zarape, and beckoning Amalia to follow, they plunged alone, unfearing, unknowing into the desert solitudes. For a day and a night they journeyed thus, stopping only to prepare food by

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the improvised fonda ; and at nightfall for sleep until the break of the early desert morning. Ever further on into the mystery and the glory of this new world.

It was the fourth hour of the third day, that old Sarai, spent with exhaustion, sank down in the sand, crying out to the stronger Amalia, that she could not journey another mile. Amalia rested beside her for a little time, then as the morning mist that had enshrouded the way, slowly lifted, revealing a low ridge of mountains in the distances, and nearer to them a solitary wayside cross, one of those marks left in the desert sands, of conflict, of struggle sometimes of dark tragedy, by an unknown hand, ever to stand as a shrine of life, calling forth fear from some, from others devotion and worship, once more the light of inspiration shone from Amalia's eyes, and touching old Sarai's arm she persuaded her to rise and follow the way that now led toward the cross.

When Sarai had reached the terminus of this little way that Amalia had impelled her to reach toward, she sank at the foot of the cross, her

hand touching it, consecrating it anew with her worn heart's devotion.

Amalia felt now herself the slow presage of the end. The food was exhausted, the water almost spent in the bottles. Dimly she followed Sarai now, over the rosary prayer for the living, and for those who seemed to be walking even now in that great Eternal, which seemed so very near as they sank thus almost exhausted in the stillness of the desert calms.

Now as their strained vision swept the distances, there appeared a form on the far horizon, evolved as it were from the sands. Then slowly the felt presence, materialized into the form of a man, a man with unkempt hair and beard, and clothed in the coarse garment of one who dwelt apart from his people, a dweller in the desert places. His form was bent with burdens, the toil of the hermit, who sometimes performs the work of a beast of burden; and with the unseen burdens of the realization in sympathy and affection of the need of those whose outer lives were separated from his by barriers seemingly impassable.

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There were only a few words in the broken parlance of the desert, and the offer of food and shelter, in the cave where he dwelt alone with his few followers, until one came on his regular journey through that way with horses and cattle, who would convey them on toward the north, in restfulness and safety.

There was silence and peace, during those first hours in the cave. Then Sarai, now rested from her great fatigue, fashioned again the improvised funda; and prepared the tortillas mixing them now with red pepper sauce and bits of grated cheese. There was also fruit, and cocoanuts that the hermit brought to them from some hidden receptacle.

Only once did their strange new protector, speaking more to himself, than to his charge, allude to any life that they had known. He spoke of Monterrey, of the glistening lights over the plaza on the great nights of the concerts; of the narrow way that led through the city to the sheltered villas of the great homes of the past; and of the campanile with its three

tiers of bells — the chimes that were even now revealing in the hush of this evening hour, the way of prayer. They were only a few words, but enough to fill Sarai's heart with a strange new wonder and question.

That night the women were given a place in the cave separated from the others. And the hermit and his peon followers retired to a place near the entrance, where they might sleep with the stars shining down upon their faces.

It was not until the fifth watch of the night that Sarai spoke again to the little Amalia. The old nurse was sitting up on her couch, her zarape thrown back from her shoulders, her thin hands clasped, and peering ahead into the dim recesses of the cave, as if from them had been evolved the great life secret of the house of Mendoza, that for so many years she had humbly served. Amalia awoke suddenly with a start, and by the faint candle-glow searched inquiringly the face of old Sarai. "It is this," the woman murmured at last, as if the child-woman, had followed the whole train of her

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wandering thought: "I believe this man of the desert, to be Signor Gabriel Mendoza, father of the one for whom we seek. He who for all these empty years, because of the cruelty of those who rule in the high places of the land, has been hidden from home and friends!"

There were no other words, out of the night that surrounded; and soon enshrouded with a great peace, old Sarai, she who for so many years had followed the fortunes of the house of Mendoza, sheltered now by the girl's encircling arms, fell into a deep sleep.

The days lengthened into weeks before the coming of the ranchman with his herds from the south. And in the chill of the evening that came now when a northerner blew from the gulf, the hermit would build a fire near the entrance of the cave, and tell over again to the lurking shadows and the night-winds the story of his life before the tangled web of intrigue, through palace and cloister had brought to him exile, and the dark, the eclipse of the light of home and love. Repeat over again the story of the night of capture, the long captivity in

the fortress prison, the escape from thence, the dwelling in the desert; and the life alone in these solitudes, as a spirit detached—apart from the great world of outer life that was once his own.

Then forgetting his own life, his white hand raised above the fireglow in an authoritative gesture, the man would tell of that which the great ranchman Zaragossa, had told him of the Mexico of to-day. Paraphased by three great words, the lust of power, of wealth, of innate cruelty. The women drew near listening, but he saw them not, so intent was he upon the recital of his story; as some soul might detached from its earthly form, and looking down from a heaven of realization, live over again in spiritual experience the struggle and the conflict—and the joy-notes touched with pain of the earth.

As Amalia listened, she felt her life changed, transformed. Before there had been but a prayer, that somewhere in the great world-life she might live to rescue and bless the life of Gabriel Mendoza. Now there came the realization of the need of her own people—the

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hated, oppressed tribes of the nation, of whom she was a child. There was not in this the lessening of her love for Gabriel, for the one who on that night when the strains of the wordless song, had sounded through the plaza, had opened to her the gates of music and of life. Only above and beyond now, the low, penetrating cry, the realization of a people's need. Once as she knelt in the dim recesses of the shadows of the cave, the voices came so insistent, that she felt she must express their meaning, and reaching for a piece of rough parchment and crayon, she wrote out the cry. It was a question why the birds and the beasts of the forest dwelt in plenty, and even the little fishes of the sea had food; and the human alone groped for bread. A whisper of the hunger and the thirst, the unfulfilled longing of thousands of hidden lives.

Then drawing near again to where the hermit crouched by the fire-glow she read the verse aloud to him. And he who had become to her, the seer of the Unseen, the prophet of the desert, whispered that it was very good.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LOS PASTORES

IT was the time of the Los Pastores in old San Antonio de Bexar, and the glory of the Star, and the call of the Shepherds through the night had settled over the Mexican quarter, that still retains the wonder of the old life amid the new of the great city.

The pilgrims, old Sarai and Amalia had been directed to the home of one Jaurez, known throughout the vast underworld of freedom's devotees as a friend of the oppressed of Mexico.

There was a typical Mexican welcome to the quarter, in a simple feast of chile, beans and tamales with black coffee, at the early night-fall. But to the earnest pleading of Sarai that they lead her even now, to the place where Gabriel was imprisoned, and let her and the child Amalia, tell his true story to the "Americano," who as children of freedom must cer-

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tainly listen, they would not answer now. It was the supreme hour of the great Los Pastores, the giving forth again of the pictured story of the birth of the Child, and all other voices must be stilled for a little while.

It was in the little Chapel of Miracles situated in the heart of the quarter, that the old drama inaugurated by the Franciscan Fathers when they taught the wondering Indian novitiates by picture and allegory in their white domed missions, was now given.

On this Christmas eve a long line of lanterns, hanging from tall poles, led to the Chapel. And within over the place of the altar and the prayer, was stretched a blue canopy set with glistening stars, bending over a miniature cradle, within which was enshrined the pictured Christ child.

As the motley crowd throng the little space, the refrain of the old new story is felt again:

“For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.

“And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall

find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.

“ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the babe lying in a manger.”

The old Mexican women, the dark mantillas falling over their faces, draw very near even to the altar and the prayer; kneeling and kissing the little waxen figure and murmuring in whispers of awe:

“ The little one, the bambino.”

The hush is broken by the prelude, the music of bells and the shepherds' song:

“ In Bethlehem's holy manger,
There shines a wondrous light,
To save our souls from danger,
The Saviour's born to-night.”

Then each one of the characters of the sacred drama are evolved out of the shadowy starry night, at first appearing in fear and sadness, which is quickly changed to joy before the presence of the child.

The angel voices rising above all: “ Fear not; for behold; I bring good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.

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"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

The shepherds kneel and offer gifts, treasures precious to the heart of the poor peon or Indian, a candle, a cluster of roses, tamales, honey, or a stringed harp.

As the music and the words of the age-old drama ceases, a strange hush prevades the room, the devout kneel and breathe a wordless prayer. While to all, picture and allegory fades before the threshold of the Unseen — the living presence of the Christ child.

And homeward through the softly illuminated way, the shepherds sing:

"To the cabin, shepherd brother,
Home across the mountain wild
Farewell, baby, farewell mother,
In thy manger, rest, sweet child."

Amalia stood a little apart from the others, gazing through a mist of tears toward it all.

It was beautiful, and it whispered to the child of the South, that revels in the glow of light and color, the outer story of the wondrous Child. And yet as she stood thus apart, seeing

all through that mystic film of sorrow that reveals the relation of things present with the Unseen and the Eternal, there was a note lacking. Someway in the wavering cadence of the music, the weird shadowed places, and the pictured glow, there was failure to voice the Love Eternal of the Christ of Bethlehem.

She was with them, and yet apart, separated by that indefinable distance, which vision inborne in the time of sorrow and struggle imparts to human souls.

CHAPTER IX

THE VOICE OF THE ALIEN PEOPLES

IN one of the northern counties of New Hampshire, situated among the foothills of the White Mountains, lies the great Parker estate. In the center of this estate is a large area of primeval forest land, forming natural parks and game preserves. The giant elms and beeches jealously guarded by the owners. And the perfect forest untouched save by a roadway which leads to its very heart, where upon a rocky eminence stands the great house of the estate. In 1898, the elder Parker had died, leaving his estate to his son Henri, who was abroad, having just finished his studies in the University of Heidelberg; and was spending a last year in the study of the history of art in Italy. The father left but one provision in his will, and that was that his son should care

for his step-mother, and her daughter Alice by a former marriage.

Henri Parker upon his return to America and the estate soon made of the place the materialization of an artist's dream. All the unexpressed longing of the three generations of Parkers who had given of their life energy for the creation of the colossal fortune, and in their struggle had not allowed themselves time to express the higher self came to being now under the magic touch of the artist son.

Young Parker spent two years here alone with his art, and in the beautification of the home and the estate, before the coming of his step-mother and her daughter.

Upon the completion of her course at the convent of Notre Dame the mother had taken Alice to the finishing school in Paris, where they had remained for the last two years.

The glory of the early summer was flooding the place with light and beauty, when Mrs. Parker and Alice returned to Elmwood. As the girl first stood on the great piazza, the wistaria vines and crimson ramblers covering

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the great colonial columns, forming a frame to her face and form, she seemed to Henri as part of the spirit of beauty and peace that pervaded the place, and that every tree and flower of the forest, and treasured picture of the old manor house was hers by right of an inheritance of beauty.

And through all the dream days of that flawless summer in their highland home, Henri felt his first thought of Alice deepen. All the outer beauty of light and color was hers; and the soft winged zephyrs stealing through the woodland, seemed to touch her face with a caressing touch, as if claiming their kinship of beauty and of rest. There seemed no minor notes at Elmwood, all was happiness and the joy of life.

It was an August day that the peacefulness of the place was suddenly broken by an alien voice. Alice remembered that day always afterwards, for it seemed a sudden blur of darkness over a life that had always before known peace and gladness and the fulfillment by eager friends of every anticipated desire.

Jose Potosi, the son of a wealthy Mexican

mine owner, who had been a fellow student with Parker at Heidelberg, came unheralded to spend a week's end with his friend before returning to his southern home in the City of Mexico.

Parker was at work on a new picture, a forest scene, when the young Mexican was announced, and at his command brought immediately to his studio. Jose paused for a few minutes at the doorway before entering, watching him at his work. Parker turned from the canvas and looking up into the face of his friend, waited for his appreciation.

"The outer expression is perfect," the young Mexican said slowly, "but, Henri, there is a note lacking in your art. I felt it in your unfinished work at Heidelberg. I know it now in this perfect development of that which was foreshadowed there. If you would reach higher expression, you must not work in this atmosphere of peace and superficial beauty. The note lacking is the note of a world's sorrow, that you do not feel or even reach toward here.

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“ I have heard someone say: ‘ The deep undertone of the world is sadness — a solemn bass, occurring at measured intervals and heard through all other tones. Ultimately all the strains of this world’s music resolve themselves into that tone! ’ Without realizing it, you can not reach toward that hidden note, that attunes life with the Infinite. Leave this place with its new-wrought symphonies of beauty in picture and sculpture! Its eternal peace of light and joy, and the realization of the outer things of life! Go with me an untraveled way through old Mexico. We will not seek alone the old cathedrals, and monasteries with their treasures of art. But seek out the hidden places, the dark recesses of the silver mines, and the great fields of the south. Where you will hear a world-voice, not loud or shrill, but deep and low, holding in its cadence the mingled refrain of thousands of hopeless, imprisoned lives. And then when the sights, the sounds grow unbearable in their crude realities let us seek the desert places. Those bare, untouched silences that are alone the true interpreters of life.

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And then I feel, Oh, Henri, that you can paint me a picture! ”

Henri arose now, and he and his guest walked out into the forest, where for hours they talked only of Mexico and its unanswered need. Upon their return, there was the early dinner, and the little musicale arranged by Alice in the great music room.

Alice immediately recognized in the young Mexican an alien spirit, others she could move by a gesture or an almost inaudible word, but he seemed almost unconscious of her presence; and she could feel in a vague way the influence of this personality upon Henri Parker. She had felt that he was among the throng of silent worshippers, that at a word he would be all devotion at her side. To-night there was a subtle change. Then suddenly a face and voice seemed to fill her whole world, and she realized that in her life one would always stand apart from all others, solitary and alone. But with this realization came the dark of the alien's presence, and the fact of separation.

Henri Parker stood with the Mexican apart

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from the little company, and failed to enter into the radiant atmosphere of joy that Alice always threw around her friends. The house with its pictures and music seemed suddenly bare to him, and every sound hollow and unmeaning. He did not realize that the spirit of this aloofness was expressed in his face and voice. That he was being rapidly borne toward a shore of being, where all his after life would be a struggle to realize the fathomless cry of human longing and despair.

Soon Alice turned to the piano to stifle her feeling in a wordless song. It was the expression of all that life had meant to her — joy — expectancy — and what had seemed fulfillment. Then deeper, mystic ways toward suffering and life seemed to open around her, but toward this Alice could not reach with Henri to-night. She could only voice the old. What had meant life and happiness to her.

The man felt that it was played for him, and him alone, and yet he did not respond. He listened through it all. And then when he knew she had finished, had reached the last

wavering note of appeal, he arose without attempting to answer, and led his friend out of the room. He was planning to go with the young Mexican for a little trip on the morrow, he explained to his mother as his excuse for leaving the company.

Alice stood for a moment in the hallway. The beauty of her face, enhanced by the glow from the shaded candles, and touched by a light that Henri had never beheld there before. The light that shines upon a woman's face but once, when life is first awakened by the glory of a great affection. And all of self is forgotten.

CHAPTER X

THE MESSENGER

THE stillness of the southern day, rested over San Antonio de Bexar. The warm sunlight flooded the grand plaza, and bathed the white pillars of the old Alamo, and glistened in the waters of the San Antonio river, that threads its way through the midst of the city, and glorified even the squalor and poverty of the old Mexican quarter with light.

Yet to Amalia as she brooded over the fruit stall, where she had found a place of service, the waves of stillness were broken. Even now before the coming of a word from the Unknown, she could see the mists parting, and a way opening, leading on to the consummation of her life purpose, the freedom of Gabriel and the answering of the cry of her people.

Amalia had become unconsciously through

the widening and the deepening of her great power of outer sympathy, the friend of all the quarter. And they came to her this morning, each with their separate needs. There was little Clarice, with baskets of flowers that she would sell in the plaza; and old Louisa with lace and drawn work, the very touch of which as Amalia lifted the delicate work reverently brought back the old home in Monterrey. Then came a crowd of children chattering, and watching hungrily for the cakes and bits of candied fruit, the gifts that Amalia never failed to bestow upon them.

Suddenly the way opened, and a man dressed as those who travel in the old-fashioned leisurely way, on foot or on the lazy burros through the by-paths of old Mexico, to realize again the spirit of place, beneath the altars of the old cathedrals, or in the shaded plazas, now pressed his way through the crowd of children, to the space just in front of the fruit-stand. He took from his pocket a letter and laid it upon the stand just before Amalia. Then waited while the girl read slowly:

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"I have received from one, who journeyed in the cattle train of Zaragossa, that Gabriel Mendoza, with two of his companions are imprisoned in a fortress in a place called Tempe Arizona; sent there at the behest of the Mexican military rulers. I fail to understand why these sons of freedom should be imprisoned. Perhaps it is because I am old and weak, and have dwelt so long in these desert solitudes, that the spirit of the silences has blinded my soul, so that I fail to understand the meaning of it all. For always there has been set before us children of the South, in the dark hours of tyranny and of bitter military despotism, that they of the North were truly free. That there liberty was enthroned, as in no other clime.

"I can not write more now, for the darkness has fallen over the desert and the cave, and I have no light,—

"Believe the word of a dweller in
the desert."

When she finished reading, the messenger spoke slowly, in the broken Mexican that he knew the girl might understand, not in an audacious tone, but with the feeling, born of a common realization of human need. "There is but one way. You and the old nurse Sarai must go with me, toward the north, even to the prison gates. There we will appear for

Gabriel and his companions, and the tribunal may listen to your voice."

As he spoke he brought from his wallet, another crumpled piece of paper. It was the unfinished poem, "The Cry of the People," that Amalia had written in the cave and afterwards given to the old hermit. "It was this," he finished, "that led me to carry out the hermit of the desert's commission. And to listen until I had heard to understand in the silences, the far cry of a people's life."

CHAPTER XI

THE BORDER-LAND

THE strange sense of unrest that had first touched the peaceful atmosphere of Elmwood, upon the appearance of the young Mexican student did not change after his departure with Henri Parker toward the south and Mexico.

A day before they had planned, the little company that composed Alice's first house party at Elmwood, prepared to return, slighted by the girl's apparent coldness. In the summer days that followed Alice moved as in a daze. The hours that she spent over her music, brought no answering response; and when in the mornings she took the long drives or walks, the beauty of field and forest seemed marred by an alien mist—a drift-cloud from some shadow land that lay beyond.

In September there came a letter from Henri

Parker, stating his plan of spending the year in the southern republic, in the study of social conditions there. The letter ended with a fervent wish expressed, that sometime he might be a means of helping in some way the shadowed lives of this great land. And after they had read and re-read the message, Mrs. Parker decided that they would spend the winter in San Antonio, instead of the Bermuda Isles, as they had planned. There they would at least be near Henri, should he by accident or sickness need their help. Mrs. Parker had always loved her stepson with the same deep affection as if he were her own son, and his strange absence was a great sorrow to her now.

It was late in November, when Mrs. Parker and her daughter reached the southern city. They soon were installed in the beautiful old Menger hotel, overlooking the plaza. Alice spent the first days in long walks over the city, following the winding way that leads from the historic Alamo, down the stream that divides the city, on down into the Mexican quarter.

One morning, her mood led her a little

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further down the long white way, into the very heart of the quarter. She stopped at the intersection of two of the narrow streets to watch a little group of Mexican children crowding around a fruit stand. Something in the wistfulness and hunger of the little faces, turned eagerly toward the display of candied fruit and cakes, strangely touched the girl; and drawing near to the stand she began to barter for some of the cakes to feed the children. She drew back surprised at the beauty and glow of higher life, pictured in the face of the Mexican girl of the fruit stand, silhouetted against the gold of the oranges piled up on little shelves in the space behind the stand. For a moment the pride of race and country glowed from the two alien faces, that of Alice the child of wealth, and of all the cold beauty of the north, and that of Amalia, the child of the desert peoples.

"No, you must not," Amalia murmured now in her broken English, with a little authoritative gesture, pushing the handful of coin from her. "They are the children of my people. I will give them of the little cakes and fruit."

Alice, recognizing the other's privilege of service, did not answer; but drew back into a shadowed place, where she might watch the children scamper for the cakes; and watch the beauty of the Mexican girl's face, as her mood of love for them deepened in its outer expression. When she had finished giving, and the children clutching their treasure, with little cries of pleasure, had turned away from the stand, Amalia turned toward Alice, with the smile born of her joy of service still lighting her face. She drew from an upper shelf a cluster of jasmine that Tessa, a flower girl, had given her a little while before, and pressed it now into Alice's hand, an unspoken expression to the other of the privileges that God had given her of ministering to the least child of her people.

Old Sarai came out of the hovel at the rear of the stand at that moment with a basket of laces. Amalia with a low whisper in Mexican, tried to persuade her not to ask for the patronage of the fair-faced northern lady. But Sarai did not choose to listen to her now, and drawn by

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the beauty of the strange face, uplifted to them, pressed near, and held up before her gaze a web of finest lace. More to reveal its delicate workmanship to her, then to persuade the lady to buy. It was one of the rarest weaves from the old loom of the Mendoza in Monterrey.

Alice took the lace from her hands, reverently touching each filmy fold; then she reached out toward Sarai a handful of gold. And the old nurse without waiting for Amalia's approval, accepted the treasure.

Alice paused now and examined all the contents of her basket; the rich laces, and old Spanish drawn work, and zarapes of wonderful designs. And with a little gesture, and her few Mexican words, signified that she would take it all to the great place by the plaza, where she lived, and there sell it for Sarai and Amalia.

It was days after this morning in the heart of the quarter, that Alice Parker noticed in one of the papers of San Antonio, the announcement of a meeting of the children of liberty of Mexico, in one of the old halls of the quar-

ter. The strange impulse that had first drawn her to the quarter, and there to enter a little way toward the great heart of the people, now moved her to follow further.

With her mother's consent, she took a carriage and with an elderly lady, who had been interested in her stories of this bit of old Mexico; and of the beautiful lace that she was trying to sell for some of the people there, drove to the place, given in the San Antonio newspaper.

The lights burned dimly, as they entered the hall, and the faces of the little group upon the platform could not be seen distinctly. The meeting began with a prelude of music, composed by some child of freedom. First there sounded forth minor notes as a chimes of bells ringing out over a city's life; then notes of struggle through a far range of being, leading at last through the meeting place of joy and sorrow toward triumphant victory.

When the music was stilled, as from a mist-cloud suddenly lifted, the lights shone clearly, and revealed with a halo of beauty, the face of

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the unknown girl, that Alice had first beheld ministering to the children of the quarter; and guided now by the higher spiritual sense of recognition, she knew that the Mexican girl was the author of this wonderful song-prayer of liberty. The voice, the soul of the true revolution.

Then there came forward a tall man. Who began to tell in broken Spanish, so that both Mexican and American might understand, the story of Mexico's sorrow, of her unanswered cry in the dark, for life in its deepest, fullest meaning. Alice listened entranced, somewhere she had heard that voice, but it seemed now as in another world. It was not until the lights were dim again, and they had passed out of the portals, and stood for a moment waiting for the return of their carriage, that a hand touched hers, and looking up, she fully recognized the speaker of the hour, as none other than Jose Potosi the young Mexican who had visited their home a few months before.

There were a few words of hurried greeting then, and Alice asked if he knew of her step-

brother Henri Parker. "Yes," the Mexican answered slowly. Then he explained that he knew but he could not answer fully now, for he had given his word to Parker, that he would not, until the latter had accomplished a mission to which he had consecrated all of his life.

Then he asked if the senorita with her mother, would be his guest to-morrow, at the home of a cousin. One of the few real old Spanish families of San Antonio. Then he would tell them something of the wanderings of Parker and himself. Their descent into the dark places of old Spain; and the revelation of life there. Alice smiled lightly her assent, and Jose Potosi bowing low, led her to the carriage, that was now waiting for them.

CHAPTER XII

IN A MEXICAN GARDEN

EVERY plaza and garden in old San Antonio, was touched with the beauty of the early summer, as Alice and her mother drove with Signor Potosi, in the open carriage to the home of the Ortega. The stone house of the Ortega was of the old Spanish type. A few of which are still owned and occupied by those descendants of the patrician Spanish families, that made of San Antonio de Bexar, a true city of old Spain; idealizing the beauty of the old in the new, as their dream city materialized upon the white plains of Bexar.

When they reached the place, they were met at the portal by the Senora Lenora Ortega, aunt of Jose Potosi, and widow of the Guido Ortega, who was one of the most honored of the city's older residents.

After the little party had been led through the great rooms, that had recently been restored to all of their old beauty; tea was served on little tables out upon the low piazza. The Senora Lenora and Alice's mother soon became friends, and found much that they cared for in common. They were really kindred ones, though appearing at first so separate; for they had lived quiet, protected lives in beauty and seclusion; and grown to womanhood in the after-glow of soft tones and music and pictures. And yet had not caught the deeper beauty of it all, ever idealizing the outer form — the jewel, the picture setting; rather than that indefinable realization of the spirit of the unseen, that gives to beauty the highest expression in human life.

After the tea, the senora brought from her treasure, a collection of pearls, and the two women were soon interested in the discussion of their beauty. They glistened like dew-drops as the senora held them up before her friends in the soft semi-light of the sheltered piazza.

Jose Potosi now arose, and leaving the two

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older ones with their jewels upon the piazza, led Alice out into the garden. A garden that had long been known as one of the most beautiful in all of San Antonio. As they paused for a little while over the delicate fragrance of a flower transplanted from the lowlands of South America, he drew from his pocket, a poem in Spanish, and slowly and laboriously translated it for Alice into the rhythm of her own tongue. It was first an allegory of the beauty of the flower-life and of the human, rising from the ground toward the sky. Then there was given the story of a child, a tender flower of life, rising in one of the dark places of Mexico — in the shadowed recesses of the silver mines, or pestilent ranches of the south. The tender face in its first beauty shining against the dark of the surrounding life. Rising toward the sky, only to be crushed in its first hour of expression by the pitiless hand of greed and wrong.

Another picture and the form is dwarfed and the face drawn with the work and the sorrow of manhood. Another and there was

shown the faces of the darkened multitudes, men who had forgotten in the mire, all the early impressions and first beauty of life. Herded like cattle in the market places of human greed.

When he had finished the story that one had thus interpreted from the heart of a flower, Alice whispered, looking up through a tear-mist into his face: "Is there no hope for these little ones of Mexico? Must they grow old in sorrow?"

Potosi answered slowly, "Only by the way of a cross, the cross that I have seen glistening in its white purity, by the wayside shrines of the desert. The cross for those who see and have power to help."

As he spoke the garden with its roses and clinging jasmine, grew dim, and instead Alice was again in the music-room of Elmwood, playing the music as she thought then to Henri Parker alone. Now she knew that it was really for another. It was the alien spirit that she was pleading to return. In another moment the man answered this unspoken realization,

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and in a voice still touched by the lingering traces of his compassion for the suffering ones — the sorrow of their life which seemed all his own — he whispered, “ Sing again the song you gave the wondrous accompaniment to, the evening Parker and I were starting toward the south-land.”

Instead of singing, Alice whispered over the lines of the prayer-song. There was silence then, and through it there was no need of words. The garden with its jasmine and fragrance of attar roses, and the silences, and through it the unsubdued cry of Mexico's sorrow had brought them a shadowed way toward the meaning of life, of love.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PRISON GATES

TWO years had passed since old Sarai and the girl Amalia had arrived in Tempe, and taken up their lodging in an old adobe house almost beneath the walls of the prison. Yet in all that time they were not permitted to look upon the face of the prisoners, nor through the united efforts of Amalia, and the messenger from the desert, now known as Henri Parker, the young millionaire philanthropist, and socialist from New Hampshire, to secure an immediate trial for the prisoners, Gabriel Mendoza and his companions.

Amalia's work was the writing of passionate prose and verses, setting forth the cry of a people's life, as only a child of poverty and sorrow can translate that low wordless dirge of despair. These were first printed in the Mexican liberal papers, and translated from them

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and published in several of the leading journals of the United States. Appealing to those who fearlessly stood for freedom the world over.

Henri Parker's work was to strive to disprove the slander brought by a party in Mexico against these champions of freedom, and of the house of Mendoza; and to bring the men to early trial. To accomplish this purpose he journeyed to Monterrey and to Mexico City, obtaining affidavits as to the truth and strength of Gabriel's life and character from his college mates, and fellow officers in the military department of the government; also such direct evidence that completely disproved the false imputation. He carried this testimony to men high in influence and authority.

Yet notwithstanding all this, it was not until after months of weary waiting, that the prisoners were brought to their trial.

In the meantime Sarai and Amalia supported themselves with lace weaving; and the little that Amalia sometimes obtained from her writing. It all meant poverty and the bitterest struggle, but through it all they were content. Just to

be near Gabriel, to feel that sometime he would be brought to trial before the great Republican court, and because of it being a part of the great country of liberty, he would be at last set free, quieted their hearts.

It was on the morning of a March day of that year, that Gabriel Mendoza and his companions were first brought to trial. Old Sarai and Amalia after much intercession, were permitted seats near the door of the court room. As he stood before the bench, both women were startled by the changed appearance of Gabriel. There was the same erectness to his figure, yet his face was drawn, his cheeks sunken and there glowed from the deep-set dark eyes, that light of vision that seems to look above all the outer forms of life as superficialities and sees only the realities of suffering, of struggle, and of love in their divine relations to human life. The vision that would glorify a prison cell, and even a scaffold of death, if it were the portal, the gateway toward the true realization of freedom by a great people.

Only once did Gabriel seem to see Amalia

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these hours of struggle for others, until it had become to him the dominant master of life.

It was night when Henri Parker left the adobe cottage. Old Sarai sank down upon her couch, the peace that had come with the stranger's words, soothing her into a quiet sleep that she had not known through the weary months. But Amalia did not try to sleep. She knelt in the great east window, waiting for the morning light to slowly rise over the low range of hills in the far distances — waiting for the dawn of her to-morrow.

She watched as the stars came out one by one in the clear southern sky, speaking now seemingly to her alone their age-old word of infinite peace and realization.

It was noon of the next day, when Henri Parker returned. Amalia knew that the trial had ended, and yet he came alone, and without his usual knock and formal greeting, hurried into the center of the old living room, where Sarai and Amalia were bending over some lace patterns. They would sell these and the rosary

of black pearls. It would buy the food and medicine that Gabriel would need during that little time that they must minister to him, before he could recover the old strength of life.

Henri Parker would never have given the message as he did, if he had only known. In the long after years, he lived over and over again that hour, and wondered at his blindness and unconscious cruelty. He had always thought that Amalia's fervor of devotion, and blind search through the dark for the imprisoned one, came from an abstract realization of freedom; from her desire alone that Mexico might be truly free. Sarai he knew was an old servant of the Mendoza family, and seemed now moved by a childish love for the exiled son of the family that she served. But that deep, mystic spiritual relationship which is remote from the earthly or the carnal, between these two children of Mexico, Amalia and Gabriel, he did not see or realize. The spiritual unity that binds two souls for eternity.

Amalia dropped the laces as he entered, and groped toward him, her voice trembling with

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joy and expectancy: "Is Gabriel free now? And will he come to us?"

"They were all acquitted at ten this morning!" Henri exclaimed, rushing on excitedly toward the climax of tragedy: "And they walked out of the court room with all the pride and power of true sons of freedom, and on down the white path that leads toward the prison portal. Then suddenly someone fired from some covert that could not be discovered until the assassin had escaped. And Gabriel, yes, Gabriel Mendoza fell dead! The others were unhurt —"

Henri Parker stopped suddenly. A dim premonition of what his words meant to her swept over him, as he watched the light of joy and life slowly fade from Amalia's rapt vision. Old Sarai dropped on her knees in the attitude of prayer, her body swaying to and fro to the rhythm of an old Spanish lullaby, she had crooned to the boy when he was but a bambino in her arms. Her voice dropping to a whisper as she murmured: "Gabriel, my child. We came so far and now you are gone!"

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Parker at Sarai's outburst, and the realization of Amalia's silent grief, left them for a time in their sanctuary of sorrow, and searched for hours for flowers, for great clusters of the tender jasmine. The bloom that always seemed to him to have the power to assuage sorrow.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE DAWN

HENRI PARKER returned in a few hours with his offering of jasmine flowers, and old Sarai arranged them in the broken Indian pottery on the low shelf where they would live for days. Then he came near to Amalia, and in the voice touched with the same feeling as when he first spoke to her, beside the old fruit stand in San Antonio, he told her the broken story of his love. A love that he had never fully realized until these last few days. He had thought that the impulse which had urged him on was only the consuming desire to break the fetters of a people; but now he knew that it was this and more. He pictured the beautiful home on the great estate in the far Northland where they would live the dream days out. "And we will work

always for the children of Mexico!" He pleaded.

When he finished, Amalia spoke, though not in answer to his plea. She was again in Mexico in the great plaza, the child of the desert, looking on from vast distances of experiences toward the joy and light and music. There was a voice — a touch of her hand, and mystic portals of life opened, leading out of her childhood of bitter poverty, and darkness. The life attuned to music and flowers and love of good.

There was a silence when Amalia finished. Then there suddenly came over her face, the old radiance, as when Henri Parker first told her a few hours before that Gabriel Mendoza and his companions would certainly be freed.

Then a hush of the spiritual, deeper than the earth-silences pervaded the room. And suddenly Henri Parker felt strangely alone. There was a little cry not of fear or of dread, but the low suppressed note of joy of some creature breaking bonds and fetters of life. A moment after Henri Parker was bending over

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her, but there was no response to his words. Amalia, child of the desert peoples was dead!

It was hours before Parker could speak again, and then he said to the group of newspaper men that were gathered in the doorway of the adobe house, striving to unravel a tangled web, and to learn what relation in life and purpose the beautiful Mexican girl bore to the first great martyr of the revolution: "She was only a voice! Too ethereal, too spiritual for earth! And someway through some mystic portal, she heard to understand the muffled cry of a peoples' life! And gave it to her world!"

The stars began to appear now, shining down upon them with the same finality of vision and of power, as on the night that Amalia had watched for the dawn of her to-morrow. They spoke to him now, and someway the young millionaire saw life past and present, and that great Hereafter, as never before. And he finished his message to the men, his voice hoarse with the depths of feeling: "And her voice shall be

heard! The last peon slave of Mexico shall be free! Toward this task, I consecrate my fortune — my life! ”

In one grave they buried them. Gabriel and Amalia, these children of the great dark Southland. Of the peoples whose life is but one great struggle for the freedom that they have not attained — only vaguely groped toward. And old Sarai scattered over the mound the jasmine flowers that had been given to Amalia.

And on the morrow Henri Parker began the journey back to Monterrey, with old Sarai, and the message of supreme sorrow to her who lived alone in the shadowed home of the Mendoza.

CHAPTER XV

THE HERMIT OF THE DESERT

AS old Sarai was wrapping her few belongings in the woolen zarape again for the journey, the inspiration suddenly came to Henri Parker, to return again the desert way, and convey the lonely hermit who Henri knew now to be Signor Gabriel Mendoza, the fugitive father of the martyred Mexican patriot, the head of the house of the Mendoza, with them to Monterrey. Mendoza would not be recognized by his friends if he appeared as a man of the desert. And it might be that the resurrection of the life of her husband from the dead past of the Senora Elena Mendoza's happiness, would assuage the awful grief in the breast of her who had now been bereaved of all.

The first beauty of the Mexican spring rested over plaza and garden when Henri Parker,

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and the hermit Mendoza, and the old servant Sarai appeared in Monterrey. They went first along the white glistening way, with the old villas embowered in their semi-tropic gardens, that led to the home of the Mendozas.

Familiar faces appeared before Sarai, and friendly voices greeted her, but she did not pause to answer their greeting. But led on without speaking toward the shadowed place, for her heart was hungering to kneel and kiss the white hand of the Senora Elena, and with all the fervor of a true servant's life devotion, whisper to her alone, away from any outer presence, that might betray their sacred trust, that she had found and brought to her, one of the loved ones out of the dark night that had enshrouded the life of her who seemed to have been strangely marked, the child of sorrow. When they reached the outer portals of the home of the Mendoza, even Sarai shrank back affrighted, bewildered as one would from some desecrated shrine. The garden was a forsaken place, the rose-bush falling from its trellis and entwined in the beds of violets and heliotrope.

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The tiny statuettes that had been brought by the founder of the house from old Grenada, were thrown down, and the fountain broken.

And when they entered within the villa, the outer appearance of desolation seemed completed here. In the great shadowed room the pictures of the legends of old Mexico, were still hanging, but their gold and jeweled frames had been cut from around them; and the marble pedestals and crystal candelabra broken.

The remnants of food in the refectory, and live coals still burning in an old brasseo, were the only evidences of a living presence still inhabiting the desolated place. As they stood in their first bewilderment, the chimes broke over the city, giving the last appeal of the morning call to prayer. And Sarai whispered in answer to the unspoken question of the others: "It is the call to prayer, toward the holy, the inner place of devotion, the Senora Elena must be kneeling there, even now. We will follow!"

The wavering music of the chimes led the wanderers now, back again over the long way,

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through the crowded market place where old Pedro was still calling out his wares; and across the great plaza, where the lilies and geraniums were blooming, and the air was heavy with the breath of orange blossoms and magnolia. And then on into another world — a world of peace — the great room of the cathedral. A cloud of incense clouded the place as they entered, forming a delicate mist of shadow over the face of the Madonna of the altar, who bore a message of love, of peace through the way of a cross as she seemed to bow with a holy benediction over their earth-stained lives.

Sarai and the hermit knelt for a moment of devotion here, before they would venture into the inner chapel. Then they arose, passing from the throng of worshippers who filled the great spaces of the cathedral. Some of the older ones gazed upon Gabriel Mendoza, and yet did not recognize him as their comrade of the past. His strange appearance, the unkempt hair and beard, and the tan of a thousand desert suns, furnished a perfect disguise, completely shielding him from their vision. For a little

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while he might remain among them, and pass unknown, as some strange dweller in the desert places.

On they passed now, through the dim passage-ways with the shining cherubs overhead to the inner chapel and the prayer. To that place beside the altar, and the one dim candle-glow, where Senora Elena knelt alone. She did not rise to speak as they entered, and the three pilgrims knelt near her, in silence.

Then they heard to understand the refrain of a life. The temple silences interpreted all; the sorrow and struggle and despair and victory. It was in a tone untouched with bitterness, or the spirit of revenge, that she murmured over her rosary; prayer for Gabriel, and old Sarai and Amalia, and her lost son. Whether they were on earth, or standing in the glory of the great Hereafter she knew not.

And then deep with feeling, came the one great petition, the prayer that had been wafted by spirit voices from the dumb lips of Gabriel and Amalia. The prayer for Mexico, for the little children, hungry and unclothed, and the

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life of men and women crushed under heavy burdens, and dumb with suffering. Through these last hours, though she had not heard the direct word, the premonition of final earthly separation and tragedy had overshadowed her. And she had been led through far portals of the spiritual, into that place of realization where the empty years of unanswered grief fell from her, and she heard to understand, not her own but the world grief.

The temple chimes were again ringing, following the age-old trail out over the Chepe Vera Hills, and now in their searching for fulfillment, they centered for expression upon the kneeling woman in the inner chapel who through a way of suffering had realized the meaning of answered prayer.

And as her friends the pilgrims drew near, gazing through the dim glow of the candle light upon her face, they saw the perfect image of the Madonna of the great outer place of prayer pictured there. And she was ever afterwards canonized in their lives as one who had reached through prayer, and suffering toward

the enshrined place of womanhood — the beatification of life.

In another moment she arose, the black mantilla falling back from her face and silver grey hair, and her rosary of pearl falling as an offering of prayer at Gabriel Mendoza's feet. In an instant he was kneeling beside her, all the years of suffering and separation, falling away like mist before them.

And Henri Parker drew old Sarai away into the brightness of the great plaza, that these two might be a little while alone, in the hallowed aftermath of life.

Soon Henri saw them coming out of the portals of the cathedral. And he met them, and led them to a seat beneath the giant palms.

"We must go to-night toward the desert place," Senora Elena answered now their unspoken questioning. "He is not safe one night here, with the military ever watching for the child of liberty! We will take what we can of the few remaining treasures. And you and Sarai on the morrow, may sell the villa and the

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gardens, and then the city will soon forget that we have lived."

At these words, old Sarai fell at her feet sobbing out: "I will go with thee, Oh, Senora Elena! I will not be shut off in a darkened world without thee!"

And Senora Elena, reached her hand with its old time gesture of authority out toward the old kneeling servant, and whispered, "And Sarai thou may'st follow if thou wilt."

That night, Parker placed in their hands the price of the villa and the gardens and more. And going with them out over the great white way, the way that Amalia and Sarai had traversed on that first great journey, saw them started from the old pueblo of the Indian tribe, toward a cave in the solitary desert place, where alone Gabriel Mendoza son of the bravest of the land, might live until Mexico was free.

Then returning to the city and the deserted home, he brought in constructor and artist to restore it to its former stateliness, and thus prepared it ever to stand as a shrine to the beauty and devotion of Amalia, child of the desert.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HOSPITAL TENT

IT was night on the plains of northern Mexico. The corps of Red Cross nurses were moving noiselessly through the hospital tents. The dense heat borne through the night with its mantle of darkness, was hushing every murmur of life. And the white-robed ones seemed like phantom figures, as they moved through the oppressive silence, which was broken only by a sob or moan from some poor peon who had reached toward the limit of human suffering.

As the night deepened, a wounded soldier who had lain for days in the damp trenches around the Mexican city, began to cry out in his fever and delirium. One of the nurses came over and took her place at his side, placing cold cloths on his hot head, and replacing the bandages on the wounded arm. Then he began to

chatter incessantly of the revolution, the siege and the battle. And the army that seemed to be advancing again beneath the hot sun of Juarez. He talked of home, of the thatched adobe hut beneath the shadow of the old sugar hacienda, where he had lived with Maria and the little ones, before the call of the revolution had thrilled the life of Mexico.

After a little while, Maria and the children had followed the soldier father and husband to the field, and he had fed them from his allowances of food, and what he could secure for them when the day's spoils of battle were divided. When the charge came upon Juarez, he had sent them away, and in the mad darkness of the hour; and the stillness of the aftermath that followed the great assault, forgotten that they lived for him. Now had come the twilight hour when he lay between the night and the day of life, and as he muttered over and over their names, the faces of the loved ones seemed peering at him through the little openings of the tent.

Suddenly though the sufferer continued his

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talk, the silence came again to the nurse. And through it she felt an unspoken word, someone striving to speak to her in the language of the spirit. Drawn by the strange call of the unseen, she turned her face from the delirious patient, to see dark eyes gleaming toward her through the semi-darkness of the place. And as she arose and groped toward the cot of this unknown one in the shadow, she recognized the face of Jose Potosi, who had become a general in the army of the revolutionists.

He knew her as she drew near, and murmured in the hoarse undertone of the shadow of suffering: "Senorita Alice — you know now — you feel with us!" He was too exhausted from the loss of blood from his wound to say more, and motioned to her to return to the fever-stricken man. She obeyed and waited for an hour there, until the man fell into a fitful slumber.

Potosi's eyes were closed when she reached his bedside again, and the head nurse approaching just then, they stood for a few minutes in whispered consultation. The nurse explained

to Alice, that the bullet wound that the man had received as he led a furious charge on the besieged city was very serious. Another tent was to be prepared in a few hours for a special operation; then someone must wait by his side for days before he could be removed to the city. They moved unconsciously toward the doorway as they spoke; and watched the dawn as it slowly rose over the far hills, which brought into dim, silvery outline like a dense plain rising out of the dark, the white roofs and towers of the old Spanish city; with here and there a smoking ruin, evidence of the struggle of yesterday. The older nurse waited for a few moments through the silence, then she spoke again hesitatingly: "There must be one nurse detached to care for this serious case. I dislike to ask you, Miss Parker, because I know you have had no experience, except that of the last few days, outside of the months of training in the hospital, where you went after you felt the call for special service as a nurse of the Red Cross. But our nurses are all inexperienced; and you by your wondrous capacity of sympathy

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for these suffering ones, seem more fitted than the others."

Just then the full glory of the sunrise over the hills and the city, and the white plains beneath, rose like the blair of trumpets from the distant heavens. And Alice felt again in its deep refrain, the cry of the suffering ones of old Mexico, as in that hour in the rose garden of San Antonio, after Jose's words of revelation: "Only by the way of a cross, that cross that I have seen glistening in its white purity, by the wayside shrines of the desert. The cross for those who see and have power to help!" She turned toward the older nurse now, and with a little sob buried her face upon her shoulder; and murmured half in fear, and half in the great trust that was coming with the glorious dawn: "I have come to my kingdom of service for such a time as this!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE ANSWERED CHIMES

A STRANGE peace rested over old Mexico. Not that every cry of suffering in this great south land was answered; or every one of her state problems solved; or the conflict between greed and the hunger and need of the people fully ended. But over all had crept a deep pervading hush and quiet. The peace that comes from hope restored; and from a newer, higher interpretation of the meaning of liberty in the heart of ruler and people.

Old Sarai had come again from the desert place at the bidding of Henri Parker, and they were preparing the villa, and the gardens as in the old time for a festa. It all was living and glowing with the flower-touch; and the subdued tones — the soft pervading beauty that the Senora Elena and Amalia had given to the

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place, were again there, unmarred by an alien note.

In the evening of that day Alice and her mother came from San Antonio where Alice had been resting after her months of service with the Red Cross. There was tea out on the old piazza that night, with the Mexican band playing beneath the rose trellis. Old Sarai sought the shadows in the farthest corner of the piazza; away from the candle-glow; she was with her friends and yet apart. To her the music of the players, and the candle-light conjured up other voices and faces. The spirit voice of Amalia singing again her prayer-song; and Gabriel's face turned toward the child of the desert with all of the wonder of his unspoken love.

The next morning Jose Potosi came. Henri Parker had arranged it all. Alice and Jose were to be married in the cathedral, and here in the old villa of the Mendoza, they were to have their first home. The marriage that day followed closely all the beauty of ceremonial of the old Spanish days. They stepped from

the bridal carriage at the portal of the estate, and came up the path through a way of roses, that Parker had caused to be strewn there; and every door of the villa was thrown wide open; and as they entered, the tender voices of the past, whispered from each pictured shrine of beauty.

Then Parker drew the two apart, from the outer glow a little way, into the shadows of the great inner room, with its marble altar and treasured faces in their frames of gold. He would tell them in this first hour of their own great joy, that story that he had never whispered to them before, of Amalia, child of the desert. He pictured to them her face, so different to him than all others, as it shone in its starry radiance through the night of her sorrow. Her voice that in its deep, far note of compassion reached toward the cry of the suffering children, and of all of the hidden oppressed ones in Mexico. The long waiting before the prison walls. His love for her that he could not voice, until he brought it that night with the jasmine flowers. Then the story from

her lips, of the house of Mendoza; the night of the great festival of music; the unanswered chimes and Gabriel only Gabriel. Then the silence and the dark, when he felt strangely alone, and looking up saw old Sarai bending over the girl; and the sudden realization that she had gone. Fearlessly entered that spirit-land, in whose very outer portal she had ever stood. "She was one of those, who even on earth realize the meaning of the Unseen." He finished as he reached forward to reverently replace the roses that had fallen from the bride's hand. A mist of tears had blinded her vision for a moment.

They turned toward the garden now, but old Sarai met them at the portals. They must not enter here for this was sacred ground. As they leaned far over the balcony, they saw out beneath the rose trellis, an aged man dressed in the garb of a hermit of the desert. And near him a woman, her form stooped with sorrow and care; a black lace mantilla falling back from her silver grey hair, and her face more beautiful then that of youth, because crystal-

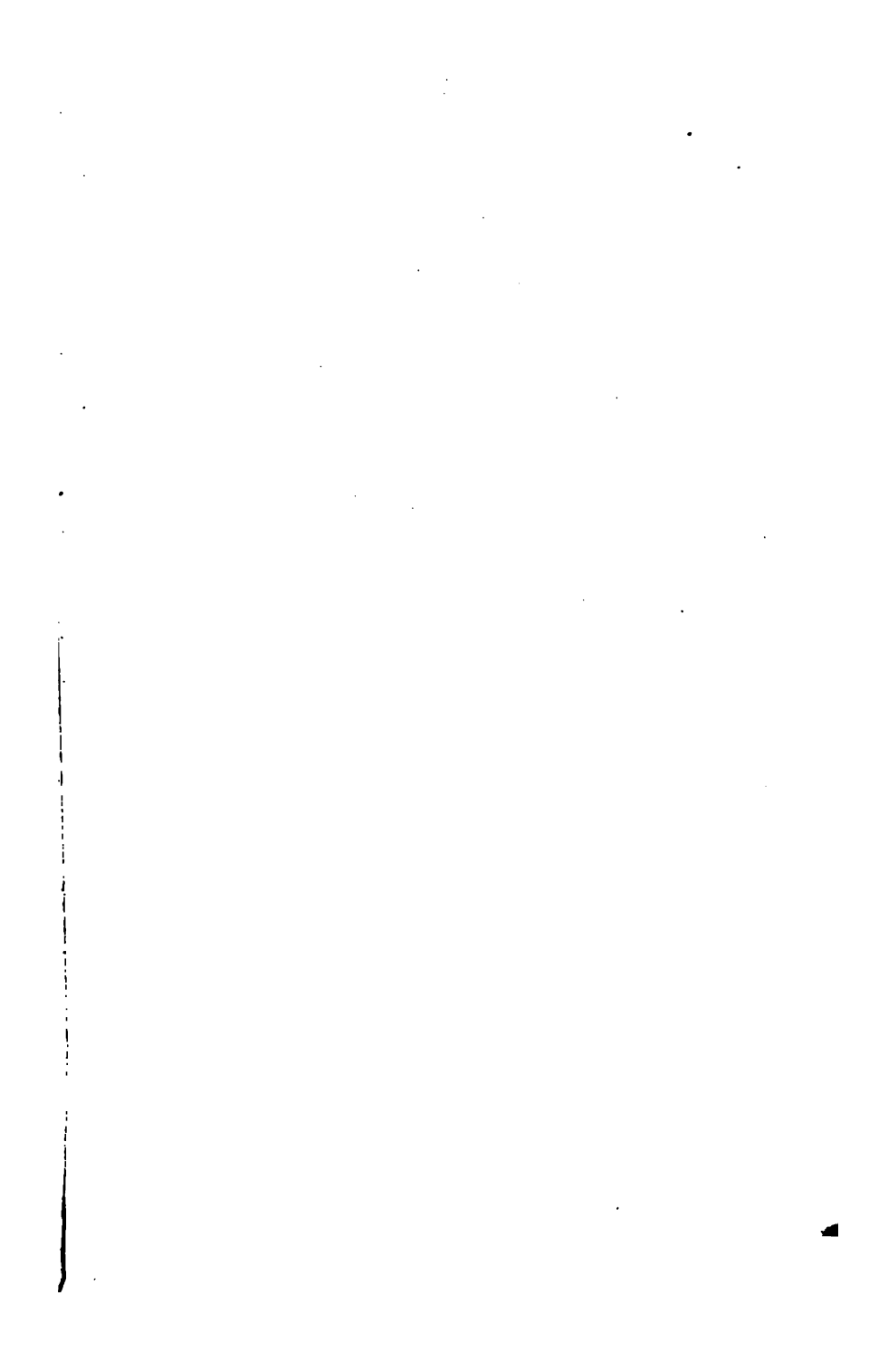
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lized and deepened by the touch of the spiritual. They were bending over the old rose bush, as of an inner shrine of their life's love and sorrow. And the man was whispering to her, its story from the past. The younger ones drew back now again into the lights and the shadows of the villa. This was love in its deep infinity of meaning — its unity of sorrow and joy, toward which the two alone on the threshold of life, could not reach forward toward now.

The chimes began to ring forth again out from the temple of prayer, through the narrow streets of the city. And out over the Chepe Vera Hills with their mystic note of struggle — returning again to linger in benediction over the exiled children of the desert who had returned. And all the tender flower-voices of the garden, seemed to mingle in the refrain. The aftermath of subdued joy, through which a people had passed from struggle and the dark toward the far heights of freedom.

Henri Parker listening alone in the shadows, seemed to hear below all other notes the spirit voice of Amalia, child of the desert.





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